

Safe and Supportive Schools Commission

The Safe and Supportive Schools Commission (Commission) was created as part of the [Safe and Supportive Schools Framework Law](#) (Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 69, section 1P), through [An Act Relative to the Reduction of Gun Violence](#). Chapter 284 of the Acts of 2014 was signed into law on August 13, 2014 (House Bill 4376). The Commission's website is <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/safety/?section=commission>.

Safe and Supportive Schools Defined (per M.G.L., c.69, s.1P)

Schools that foster *a safe, positive, healthy & inclusive whole-school learning environment* that:

- enables students to develop positive relationships with adults and peers, regulate their emotions and behavior, achieve academic and non-academic success in school and maintain physical and psychological health and well-being; and
- integrates services and aligns initiatives that promote students' behavioral health, including social and emotional learning, bullying prevention, trauma sensitivity, dropout prevention, truancy reduction, children's mental health, foster care and homeless youth education, inclusion of students with disabilities, positive behavioral approaches that reduce suspensions and expulsions and other similar initiatives.

Commission Responsibilities

Make recommendations to the Department and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding:

- updating, improving and refining the Safe and Supportive Schools Framework and Self-Assessment Tool for Schools (<http://BHPS321.org>), advising regarding the feasibility of statewide implementation; and

Make recommendations to the Governor and legislature regarding:

- Strategies for increasing schools' capacity to carry out the administrative functions identified by the behavioral health and public schools task force;
- Steps for improving schools' access to clinically, culturally and linguistically appropriate services;
- Evidenced-based training programs and professional development for school staff on addressing students' behavioral health and creating safe and supportive learning environments;
- Federal funding sources that can be leveraged to support statewide implementation of the framework;
- Best practices for collaboration with families, including families of children with behavioral health needs; and
- Model approaches for integrating safe and supportive school action plans with school improvement plans and for using the framework to organize other school and district improvement processes.

Commission Reports

The Commission has submitted four annual reports to the legislature, with recommendations and summaries of Commission activities during 2015-2018. The Commission has also provided information to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education related to principles of effective practice for integrating student supports. Additionally, the Commission has helped guide focus groups conducted by Department staff and by Harvard Law Clinic students (guided by a Commission member and colleagues from Mass. Advocates for Children and the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative). Focus groups have been a variety of educational stakeholders such as administrators, school committees, teachers, students, families, and community-based supports providers. Topics have included family engagement, administrative capacity to implement safe and supportive schools, and access to services. Additional focus group summary highlights will be posted later this year related to student voice and access to services.

Department Contact Information

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